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Carthage public/private teamwork, vision honored

By Joy Swearingen, Managing editor

The partnership that is breathing life into the college campus in Carthage was honored state wide during the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs annual conference last week in Peoria.

Six agencies were honored with the state Professional Partnership Award, one of four state Vision to Action awards presented during the conference.



"This award recognizes the positive work that is happening because of this public/private partnership," said Carthage interim community developer, Charlie Bair. Included in the award are Carl Sandburg College, City of Carthage, Carthage Veterinary Service, Professional Swine Management, Prairieland Investment Group and Carson Motors.

The award cited all these agencies "for providing exceptional leadership and support to Carthage, Illinois." Their efforts led to the purchase of the campus by Prairieland Investment Group, whose principals are veterinarians from Carthage Veterinary Service and Professional Swine management.

This group donated one building on the campus, the auditorium, to Carl Sandburg College, who is financing renovation of the auditorium, and is proposing a consortium of groups to add a gymnasium and fitness center to the Charger Center Auditorium. Rob Carson of Carson Motors has worked to draw outside and community performers to the auditorium, and has spearheaded a capital fund drive to help in the effort.

Much of this work was aided through the City of Carthage by former Carthage community developer, Brenda Pyatt, and is continued by interim development director, Bair.

Presentation of the awards was made by Gisele Hamm, manager of the MAPPING the Future of Your Community Program, a unit of the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs. The Mapping program is a visioning and planning program to help rural communities create a long-range vision for their community and a plan of action for achieving it.

The Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs is located at Western Illinois University. Its 21st annual conference in Peoria March 3 and 4 included over 300 elected officials and community leaders from Illinois and neighboring states.

Those attending from Carthage were Charlie Bair, Brenda and Bill Pyatt, now of Decatur; David Walker, Hancock County Board president; Tom Schmidt, president of Carl Sandburg College; John Huston, director of Carl Sandburg College; and Matt Dickinson, Carthage businessman and member of the Carthage Community Development board of directors.